

Parole News

The Massachusetts Parole Board's Quarterly Newsletter

Fall, 2008



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<i>Staff Participate in Annual Homeless Veteran Event</i>	3
<i>Victim Rights Across State Borders</i>	5
<i>Employee Profile: Kerry Comaskey</i>	7
<i>Parole Officers Making a Difference</i>	9
<i>COMECC Kickoff 2009</i>	11

Chairman Speaks at Bunker Hill Community College Reemployment Event

By Donald Giancioppo, Executive Director

On Friday, October 3, 2008, I attended a reemployment breakfast at the Bunker Hill Community College along with Chairman Conrad, Board Member Pam Lombardini, Director of Reemployment Dave Sullivan, Employment Specialist Chris Foster, Parole/Reentry Officer Jim Alves and Substance Abuse Coordinator Camilla Campbell from the Brockton Regional Office. Also in attendance were representatives from Bunker Hill Community College faculty and administration, Federal Probation & Parole, the Workforce Development Board, the Department of Correction and employers from the private sector. This was the first opportunity and privilege I had to watch Chairman Conrad speak on behalf of the Agency outside of the office. It was a noteworthy event and the agency was well represented by the Chairman.

Chairman Conrad provided the group with valuable insight into his own diverse career, which included one of his first jobs as an Employment Specialist working with welfare mothers, and stressed how critical it is for the Agency to collaborate with other stakeholders in trying to secure long-term, meaningful employment for parolees. The Chairman focused on the importance of educational and vocational training in enhancing employment opportunities and the need for involvement and assistance from academic institutions, non-profit agencies and the private sector. Chairman Conrad's message was compelling and resulted in several organizations looking to partner with us in our reemployment strategies and initiatives, which I am certain will be beneficial.

I think this meeting was a great example of what we can expect under the Chairman's leadership. Chairman Conrad is compassionate yet determined in his approach, open to suggestions and ideas from others, and committed to improving the Agency's ability to fulfill our mission. Chairman Conrad is a man of integrity, passion and purpose who is truly dedicated to the Agency's mission and constantly emphasizes and encourages teamwork, honesty and innovation. Even during this fiscally challenging period he continues to remain positive about the future of the Agency with a comprehensive vision of where he wants us to go, and I am confident he will lead us through this difficult time and to many successes!

Interstate Compact Offender Tracking System (ICOTS)

By Donald Lafratta, Interstate Compact Supervisor & Julie DiCenzo, Administrative Assistant

On October 6th, the Interstate Commission for Adult Offender Supervision (ICAOS) launched its new national offender tracking system, ICOTS. This web based system has been designed to connect the Interstate Compact offices in all states and provide timely electronic paperless transfer and tracking of offenders seeking to relocate between states.

Many offenders under community supervision seek to relocate from the state in which they were sentenced, to another state. Reasons for these relocation requests vary greatly, but can include an offender hoping to return to his or her primary state of residence, or more frequently, to the location where immediate family members reside. These family members, or individuals the Compact calls "sponsors", may be positioned to offer the best support in the offender's return to the community. ICOTS is a real-time application that will allow states to streamline these requests for relocation and transfer of supervision.

Public safety is always of primary concern to all community supervision agencies. ICOTS provides enhanced public safety by ensuring that all necessary documentation regarding victim concerns, protective orders, conditions of supervision and other related items are submitted to the state that will assume supervision at the time the request is made. This is necessary to ensure the receiving state has sufficient information to aid in the development of an appropriate supervision plan. ICOTS has also been designed so that issues arising during the course of supervision, such as behavior deemed to be a violation of a condition of supervision, triggers alerts to the sentencing state, notifying that action, such as revocation of supervision, may be needed.

Data entered into ICOTS will be archived and can be recalled for multiple needs. This will save time, resources and ultimately money for states that no longer need to gather and reenter information from paper files on offenders who have transferred in the past, and seek to move again.

Board Member Dottridge Honors "Good Scout" Recipient

By Stephanie Coughlin, Research Analyst

On November 7th, Board Member Doris Dottridge had the opportunity to honor Barnstable County Commissioner, Mary LeClair. Ms. LeClair was granted the "Good Scout" award on behalf of the Boy Scouts of America, Cape Cod & Islands Council. Ms. LeClair was recognized by the Boy Scouts organization for her generous commitment to Barnstable County, her local government activities and her active involvement in numerous nonprofit organizations that support young men, women and adults in making better lives for themselves. The Boy Scout organization feels strongly that Ms. LeClair has adopted the "Scout Slogan" which requires doing a good turn daily. Board Member Dottridge believes Mary has done this for many years, for many people, from many different cultures and backgrounds, without hesitation.

During her speech, Doris spoke of her days as a Mashpee Police Officer and recalled the many times she was able to call on Mary- anytime of day or night, to help an individual who needed access to substance abuse treatment. Board Member Dottridge also talked of Mary's generous charity work in the town of Mashpee by organizing gift collections for the children of Mashpee's school system, to raising and handling the funds for the Mashpee DARE program which also included participating in the annual Mashpee DARE telethon.

Mary has also assisted Board Member Dottridge in her current role as a Board Member by continually assisting with Parole Board referrals, through her continued engagement with civic organizations, community based facilities, municipalities and other drug treatment providers. Board Member Doris Dottridge not only considers Mary a friend, but a role model and ambassador to the Barnstable community and other agencies statewide.

Parole Staff Participate in Annual Boston Stand Down for Homeless Veterans

By Ray Chavaree, Assistant Parole Supervisor

On August 8th and 9th, the Massachusetts Parole Board participated in the annual Boston Stand Down for Homeless Veterans for the third straight year. The officers participating in the event were Assistant Parole Supervisors Ray Chavaree, Joe Waystack and Steve Kelly, along with Parole Officer Pearl Holder. Director of Policy and Strategic Planning, Kira Dunn, and Suffolk University interns Christina Luna and Michael Walsh, were also in attendance for the Stand Down.

A Stand Down loosely refers to the wartime practice of removing exhausted combat units from their forward lines to a place of relative security and safety for rest and recovery.

Nationwide, Stand Down is an intervention program designed to help the nation's estimated 275,000 homeless veterans in their "combat" with life on the streets. Homeless veterans are brought together in a single location for one to three days and are provided direct access to community resources needed to address their individual needs to rebuild their lives. Just as a Stand Down in a combat area afforded soldiers the occasion to renew their spirit and health, today's Stand Down affords the same opportunity to homeless veterans.



Pictured left to right are Joe Waystack, Christina Luna, Michael Walsh and Ray Chavaree.



Pictured above are formal military excises performed at the event.

to homeless veterans. This year, approximately 80 Stand Down events will be held nationwide to assist and support homeless veterans.

At the Boston Stand Down, more than 500 veterans were provided a broad range of services which included food, clothing, shelter, MA I.D. cards, employment counseling and referrals, in addition to legal, medical and mental health assistance. Those homeless veterans who were eligible for Parole's reentry services were also referred to the Massachusetts Parole Board's Regional Reentry Centers (RRC's). Most importantly, the Stand Down created an environment of safety and security to assist these homeless veterans renew their sense of self respect and hope.



Chairman's Corner

I first want to take a moment and thank everyone who has demonstrated their support of my becoming the new Chairman of the Massachusetts Parole Board. I would like to send my personal thanks and appreciation to Governor Patrick for entrusting me with such an important responsibility during this critical time of state government. This is an honorable opportunity for which I am grateful, and my expectation for the Parole Board is tempered by my goal of being the best managed organization in the Patrick Administration. This mission, while lofty, will not be unproblematic, but anything that is done well and at a high level, takes drive, passion, intensity, deliberation, focus and shared will of hope. I have seen this demonstrated and confirmed by the hard work performed in the recent weeks by all members of the Agency.

This tenuous time in our economy and turbulent fiscal climate has made us well aware of the importance of tightening our belts. The Agency has demonstrated its true core principles by meeting these challenges and still being able to perform at the highest level. I would advocate articulating this principal as part of our mission proclamation of doing business, by streamlining state government and delivering high quality of vocation. I trust and I accept as true, that transparency of state government along with collaboration of private partners, community based organizations and effective policy making decisions will help the Agency sustain itself during this critical and uncertain time of government.

"Placing men and women back into the community as productive members of our society, is of the highest priority"

In addition to the fiscal climate, there have been many successes and collaborations with various entities, such as the one with Sheriff Cabral with the merger of the Mattapan Regional Office moving to the Bradston Street location. Also, Adjutant General of the Massachusetts National Guard, Major General Joseph Carter is working with us to find space to house our files that have been stored in a Medfield state building. These successful collaborations with other state agencies will save our Agency thousands of tax payers' dollars, as well as creating goodwill relationships among other branches of government. This is only a couple of successes during the relatively short period of time that I have been at the helm however, we are very much engaged with several other organizations including but not limited to, The Boston Foundation, Northeastern University, National Institute of Corrections, State of Georgia, Boston University, Blue Cross Blue Shield, The Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation, Spectrum Program, Boston Police Department, Boston School Department and the Justice, Equality, Human Dignity and Tolerance (JEHT) Foundation. My commitment to seek and ask the community as a whole to collaborate with us to support the Agency's mission towards positive re-entry by placing men and woman back into the community as productive members of our society, is of the highest priority.

While I have been told repeatedly that I am a "dreamer" who can not change the way things are, I am a firm believer that failure is not an option and we must continually strive to make a difference. Our historical political milestone should motivate us to set clear expectations not just of others, but for each and every one of us.

Personal Perspective: Victim Rights Across State Borders

By Dena Coffey, Victim Service Coordinator



Pictured above is Dena Coffey

In January of 2007, I began my work with the Massachusetts Parole Board's Interstate Compact Unit as its Victim Service Coordinator. The purpose of this initiative is to expand and enhance services provided to crime victims and families of crime victims on a national scale working from the state to state level. In my assignment, I am responsible for reviewing interstate cases, conducting mandated victim notification, researching the case for any Massachusetts victim who may be in fear or need information on the whereabouts of the offender and provide on-going support to those victims who have been identified.

The Interstate Compact for Adult Offender Supervision's Mission Statement reads:

The Interstate Commission for Adult Offender Supervision will guide the transfer of offenders in a manner that promotes effective supervision strategies consistent with public safety, offender accountability and victim rights.

The Massachusetts Parole Board's Interstate Compact Unit works in collaboration with the rest of the country in an effort to ensure best practices are used in accordance with the Mission Statement.

On September 8th I was fortunate enough to attend the Interstate Compact for Adult Offender Supervision's Annual Meeting held in Palm Springs, California. Also in attendance from the Parole Board were Mark Conrad, Chairman; Donald Giancioppo, Executive Director; Patricia Malone, Deputy Compact Administrator; and Donald LaFratta, Interstate Compact Supervisor. The Massachusetts Parole Board was also recognized for having the first ever Victim Service Coordinator in attendance at this event. .

Massachusetts Parole Board

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I also had the privilege of meeting Ms. Pat Tuthill, the Interstate Compact for Adult Offender Supervision's National Victim Representative. Ms. Tuthill recognized Massachusetts as a leader in the field of Victim Services and is planning to collaborate with our agency in an effort to formalize a national initiative pertaining to victim rights in the process of parolee relocation, travel and supervision across state borders.

I found this meeting to be both enriching and invigorating and I look forward to continuing my work with both our Victim Services Unit and our Interstate Compact Unit. I am very grateful for the opportunity to have been in attendance.

Statistically Speaking ...

By Stephanie Coughlin, Research Analyst

In this edition, "Statistically Speaking" will highlight two of Parole's key initiatives: the Regional Reentry Center (RRC) and the Transitional Housing Program (THP). The focus of the RRC effort is to enhance public safety and restore confidence in the criminal justice system by reinventing the traditional model of parole. The RRC's serve as the nucleus of reentry services for all state offenders released from a correctional facility by offering immediate access to post-incarceration programming and services. In Fiscal Year 2007:

- RRC officers serviced a total of 713 ex-offenders
- 281 or 39% of the above ex-offenders returned to the RRC for additional assistance
- RRC Officers made 333 program referrals
- RRC Officers also aided 473 individuals in obtaining a Massachusetts identification card (through a collaboration between the Parole Board and the Registry of Motor Vehicles)

THP addresses the reentry needs of parolees and ex-offenders by providing up to four months of transitional housing (long-term and sober) and access to support services. These support services range from job training to counseling for both substance abuse and mental health issues. In Fiscal Year 2007:

- 385 individuals were placed into transitional housing
- Of the 409 clients who discharged from housing during this time period:
- 269 or 66% were successful discharges
- 196 or 48% of clients were employed at discharge
- 276 or 67% of clients had obtained sustainable housing upon program discharge

Successful reentry programs such as the RRC and THP aim to prevent crime and more importantly, help in the rehabilitation process, which ultimately reduces the number of offenders returning to incarceration.



New Parole Officer hires, Joe Raynor and Lisa Armstrong, take a break from their training to pose for a picture.



Employee Profile: Kerry Comaskey Institutional Parole Officer

By Stephanie Coughlin, Research Analyst

This edition of the Parole Newsletter highlights and focuses on the efforts of Institutional Parole Officer (IPO) Kerry Comaskey. Kerry is considered by her Deputy Chief, Lisa Redmond, as an asset to the agency. Lisa states, "Kerry is excellent at tracking her offenders and has a vast knowledge of Parole date calculations and regulations". After hearing these complimentary remarks made about Kerry I was also pleased to discover what a humble and gracious individual Ms. Comaskey was to speak with.

*"Kerry is excellent
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Kerry started her career with Parole in 1989 as a Transitional Parole Officer (TPO) in Concord. She made the jump to IPO in 1998 and currently holds this position at MCI-Shirley. Before coming to Parole Kerry attended Mount Wachusset Community College and Fitchburg State College earning her Associate's Degree in Criminal Justice. Interestingly, after college Kerry spent 3 years working as a Correctional Officer (CO) and a Correction Program Officer (CPO) for the Massachusetts Department of Correction (DOC). Ms. Comaskey attributes her experiences working for both the DOC and Parole to her strong knowledge of the Parole system today.

While conversing with Kerry I picked up on her level of comfort and ease with which she approaches her job. She talked openly about what she enjoys about her work- the collaboration between Parole and the DOC and the fact that her tasks change daily. I also asked Kerry to explain the challenges she faces as an IPO- she stated, "it is so hard to get these guys into programs, there are never enough beds". Kerry also stated that keeping up with current sex offender laws can often pose a challenge since they are constantly changing.

Working in a prison environment may be a challenge for some, but Kerry sees it as her day to day life now. She has become accustomed to routinely locking doors behind her and always making sure that she limits her travel around the institution to times when there is no inmate movement. Ms. Comaskey also commented that working with inmates and parolees can often be rewarding, especially with the younger males. She feels as though she is helping these inmates to achieve the first step in the process of getting their life straightened out, the opportunity to be granted parole.

I asked Kerry if she had any advice for some of the younger females in the Agency who aspire to be an IPO. Her advice, "work steadily and keep taking the Civil Service exam each time it is offered". She also stated, "be patient, it took me a long time to climb the ladder". Kerry also recommends taking advantage of any trainings or educational classes that either Parole, the DOC or the state may offer.

In her spare time, Kerry enjoys going to the gym and volunteering at her church, which is affiliated with the Montachusett Interfaith Hospitality Shelter. The mission of the Montachusett Interfaith Hospitality Network is to provide shelter, meals and comprehensive assistance to homeless families with children and to increase community involvement in direct services and advocacy. After retiring from the Parole Board, Kerry expressed interest in working with battered woman or pregnant teenagers.

Kerry also asked that I mention her staff in this article- Jane Desolier and Gary Dupuis. She would like to thank them for always being supportive and hardworking, and acknowledged that they comprise a great team!

Parole Board Welcomes the Administrative Services Team

By Rachel Thomas, Personnel Officer I

The Parole Board has a new department – Administrative Services! Administrative Services is responsible for two major functions within the agency – Fiscal and Human Resources. So who's in the Administrative Services Department, and what do they do?

Pamela Minchoff - Director of Administrative Services (508-650-4516)

Pam has worked for the Commonwealth for 13 years at the Department of Mental Health and has spent the last six months working for the Parole Board. Pam oversees both functions of Administrative Services. As Chief Financial Officer Pam advises the Chairman and Executive Director on all aspects of the agency budget, contract performance and payments. The Fiscal Unit is also responsible for the supervision fee process. Changing hats, as Director of Human Resources, Pam's role is to implement day-to-day operations of personnel, payroll, and workforce planning and development.

Esther Chan – Accountant IV (508-650-4557)

Esther worked for the Executive Office of Public Safety for over four years and started with the Parole Board in July 2008. Esther supports the fiscal side of Administrative Services and her responsibilities include ensuring agency bills are paid on time, procurements, managing vendor accounts and assisting with budget planning.

Rachel Thomas – Personnel Officer I (508-650-4573)

Rachel is new to state service. She comes to us from the private sector where she spent over eight years working in Human Resources. Like Esther, Rachel also joined the Parole Board in July 2008. Rachel supports the Human Resource side of Administrative Ser-



Pictured left to right are Rachel Thomas, Pamela Minchoff, Lilly Rivera, Esther Chan and Gloria Lewicki.

vices and her responsibilities include: processing weekly payroll, records management, benefits and recruitment.

Lilly Rivera – Word Processor II (508-650-4563)

Lilly can be considered a Parole Board veteran; she has been with the Parole Board for 18 years. Lilly has spent the bulk of her service supporting Transitional Services but now is part of the Administrative Services team. Lilly manages all supplies for Central Office, processes mail and also assists with special projects.

Gloria Lewicki – Word Processing Operator I (508-650-4500)

Gloria has been with the Parole Board for over a year. She became a permanent member of the Agency in April 2008. Gloria manages the front office, greeting visitors and answering the telephone. She has recently accepted the responsibility of processing supervision fees and she also assists Rachel collecting timesheets for the weekly payroll.

Please feel free to contact anyone on the Administrative Services team if you have any questions and/or concerns. It is our mission to provide “top notch” customer service to every staff member of the Parole Board.

Parole Officers Making a Difference in the Reemployment Initiative

By Christopher Foster, Employment Specialist

The Lawrence Regional Reentry Center has been a driving force behind the success of the Reemployment Unit. Part of the reason for this success can be attributed to certain individuals assigned to this region. Reentry Supervisor Steve Kelley and Reentry Officer Ann Clegg have shown remarkable support for the Parole Board's reemployment initiative. This team has attended every reemployment event in their area, conducted outreach to local employers and worked with the Reemployment Unit's Employment Specialist to place clients in meaningful positions.

Additionally, Parole Officer Bonnie MacDonald has shown great enthusiasm for the initiative. Due to Bonnie's commitment, she connected with an employer in the construction field who was potentially interested in

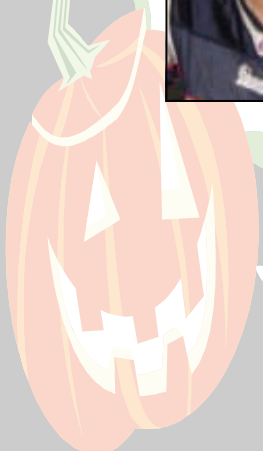
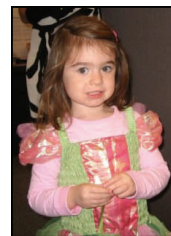
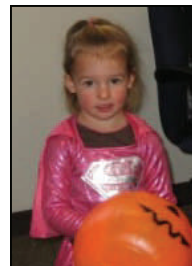
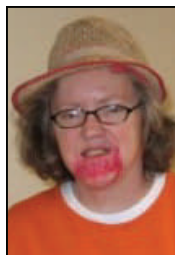
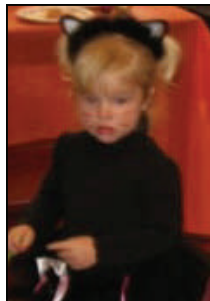
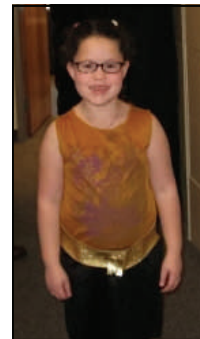
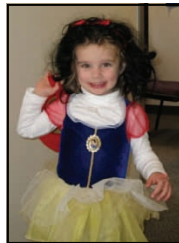
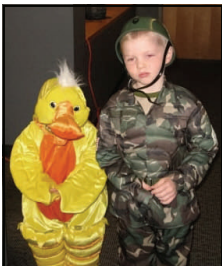
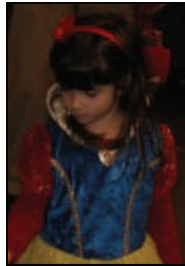
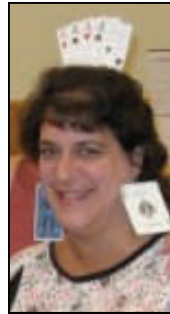
continuing and expanding their work with Parole. The employer adopted the Unit's process for job placement and since then many ex-offenders in that region have been successfully placed. It is because of Bonnie's dedication to the reemployment initiative that we have such a loyal employer.

Parole Officer involvement is a perfect example of what Chairman Mark Conrad has envisioned for the reemployment initiative. An officer's involvement can provide a support network for the employer, and Parole Officers can work as a liaison between the ex-offender and the Employment Specialist working with that offender. As reemployment is a key element in the successful reentry of offenders, it is important to do all that we can to support this process.

On Halloween night, two Parole Officers from the Lawrence Regional Office—Ken Trocki and Tim Barry—assisted the Salem Police Department in keeping the streets and neighborhoods crime-free! On Halloween night Salem welcomed over 100,000 visitors and still remained incident free!



Trick or Treat Time at the Parole Board Halloween Party



Victim Service Unit: Update on Education and Outreach Initiatives

By Diane Coffey, Director of Victim Services

The criminal justice system can be complicated and intimidating to victims of crime. Throughout the state, victim service professionals play an integral role in providing services to crime victims. These professionals working in both criminal justice agencies and community-based programs, are our partners and allies. Providing collaborative and coordinated services to crime victims is essential to upholding the Victim Bill of Rights. This bill provides appropriate and effective services, and assists victims in their healing. For victims of crime, receiving timely and accurate information about all aspects of the criminal justice process is critical. Parole is no exception. Throughout their involvement in the criminal justice process, victims are involved with many agencies and staff, each with individual responsibilities and mandates— Police Departments, District Attorney's Offices and post conviction victim services and community-based programs. Training victim service professionals on the parole process is a vital component of the Parole Board's Victim Service Unit mission.

With this in mind, we have embarked on an education and outreach initiative. Our goal is to provide training for victim service professionals at criminal justice agencies and community-based programs. Recently, the Unit presented at the Northwestern District Attorney's Office Victim Witness staff meeting. We are also training at community roundtables and task forces. These initiatives will ensure that victim service professionals have a greater understanding of parole, and provide an opportunity to enhance our collaborative relationships. Working together, understanding each other's roles and responsibilities and providing knowledgeable, respectful and compassionate advocacy, is the foundation of quality victim services.

COMECC Kickoff 2009

By: Stacy Book



Pictured left to right are Scott T. Neely, Stacy Book and Mark Conrad.

This year, I have the opportunity of being the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Employees Charitable Campaign (COMECC) representative for the Parole Board. The 2009 COMECC Campaign Kickoff was held on Wednesday, Oct. 22nd to discuss how COMECC contributions play a key role in helping less fortunate friends and neighbors across the Commonwealth. There was a presentation by Scott T. Neely, Executive Director of The Cam Neely Foundation for Cancer Care. The Neely House provides a convenient, comfortable place for cancer patients and their families and is a safe haven during a difficult time in their life. Chairman Conrad made opening remarks to initiate the campaign and I distributed Central Office contribution sheets. Regional offices will receive their contribution sheets with paychecks. Please contact me at Central (508.650.4539) if you have any questions about COMECC!

Just a Reminder!



Let's all pitch in to help save energy by remembering to shut off your computer, monitor and printer every night!